

Safe Shopping Will Keep Thieves from Spoiling Your Holiday Cheer

The holidays are the season for giving gifts to family and friends. Make sure you don't wind up giving your gifts to thieves instead.

"Shoppers this time of year often fall victim to theft and robbery," said Paul Johnson, Chief of the California Department of Consumer Affairs' Bureau of Security and Investigative Services (BSIS). "But, if you're careful and follow a few common-sense rules, you can protect yourself and your purchases."

BSIS offers the following advice to shoppers:

- Don't linger in the parking lot of a store or mall.
- Before entering a store, make a mental note of where you're parked and which entrance and exit you'll use. When you're ready to leave, get your car keys out before you exit the building, and quickly store your purchases out of sight, preferably in the trunk.
- Be aware of your surroundings: Think safe, be safe.
- Keep purses and wallets close at hand. Whenever possible, use breast pockets in jackets or front pockets in pants to store keys or money. Keep an eye on your credit cards: Make sure you get them back from cashiers. Remember, they are very busy this time of year.
- If you are the victim of a theft or some other crime, look for one of the uniformed security guards that usually patrol the mall. They are trained to act quickly to protect consumers, notify authorities and collect information that may help police catch suspects. If no uniformed guards are around, contact a store employee or go to the mall's information booth to report the incident.
- If you use a home security system or a security patrol company, the holiday season is a good time to reacquaint yourself and your family with those pertinent procedures and telephone numbers.
- If you put gifts under a tree at home, keep nearby windows closed and drapes or blinds shut at night or when no one is at home.



SHOPPING SAFETY TIPS

- ▶ Make note of parking location
- ▶ Store purchases in trunk
- ▶ Keep credit cards, wallet close

The [Bureau of Security and Investigative Services](#) is one of many boards, bureaus and programs within the California Department of Consumer Affairs. The Bureau licenses more than 200,000 security guards and 2,500 security guard agencies.

For more [holiday consumer tips](#) visit the Department of Consumer Affairs' Web site at www.consumer.ca.gov.